

Recovery under siege

Quite recently, I was appointed as a consultant with the World Health Organisation (WHO). This was on the strength of my experience as a mental health service user trainer and my contribution to strategic developments in recovery-based mental health services provided by Hertfordshire Partnership Foundation Trust. My first engagement soon followed; a week long visit to Palestine at the end of August, to both present at a conference hosted by An-Najah University in Nablus on recovery from mental illness, and to co-deliver a recovery teaching programme at a summer school in the West Bank. This was part of a programme launched in June by WHO and the Ministry of Health to improve mental health services in West Bank and Gaza and to tackle stigma.

A key member of the audience was the Health Minister. However, in contrast to similar conferences here where service users and carers are invited to participate, the audience was predominantly mental health practitioners.

In preparation, I experienced conflicting tensions of trepidation and excitement. Could I cope, would I be safe and what new horizons would I encounter?

On arriving in Ramallah where the summer school was based, I was struck by the almost barren and bleached



Street scene, Ramallah

landscape and the contrasting city centre which was ablaze with colour and potent with an array of odours.

From the first day of the summer school I was both impressed and moved by the dignity, knowledge base and resilience of the mental health professionals it was my honour to meet. To be able to deal with the daily reality of occupation which is encroaching on their communities and still find the strength to work in the most challenging circumstances helped me to view my own life challenges in a very different light.

One community based psychiatrist told me he was seeing a hundred service

users a day! I heard there was frustration that non governmental organisations (NGOs) tend to focus money and resources into post traumatic stress disorder whereas people suffer from the whole spectrum of mental disorders. At the same time NGOs have improved access to medications.

Although services are mainly operating on a maintenance basis, there is a great will to develop recovery based services. I was made to feel very welcome and there was much interest in service user involvement. I am hoping to return to Palestine later this year and look forward to meeting the many friends I have made and helping them to progress their



Members of WHO, relaxing

recovery programme for the betterment of the service users of this proud but hugely challenged country.

Chris Munt

BBC
headroom
bbc.co.uk/headroom



Launched in May 2008, the BBC Headroom campaign aims to de-stigmatise mental health and well-being issues and provides a resource across the BBC to support its activities in these areas. As well as commissioning programmes and linking in with existing ones, the campaign

includes outreach projects. For example, St Albans Central Library was chosen as one of 10 pilot sites in England and Wales to hold a variety of events to promote mental wellbeing. The stress busting

activities have been so successful the pilot is going to be rolled out across Hertfordshire. A bibliotherapy booklist of 'Stress Busting Books' has been produced and the books featured are on display in St Albans Central Library. The target audience is predominantly people with everyday conditions such as stress or anxiety but part of the campaign does address more serious mental illness.

VIDEONATION

Four Viewpoint members have made their own films about their experiences of mental illness for Video Nation, a BBC website showing short 'slice of life' video clips. Working with Victoria Cook of Three Counties Radio, Steve Westwood, Lucy Johnston, Len Goff and Steve Cowley each took a camera home and filmed aspects of their lives to show what it's like to live with and recover from severe mental illness: www.bbc.co.uk/videonation www.bbc.co.uk/threecounties

Viewpoint awarded research contract

A group of Viewpoint members has successfully bid to develop 'Recovery Based Outcome Measures' for commissioners across the East of England. Chris Munt, Angela Johnson, Andy Smith and Suzanne Nash will be researching what recovery really means to service users and then developing measures which will be used to ensure services are doing their best to promote recovery. The researchers will be supported by Simon des Forges at Viewpoint and they are interested in hearing your views on what recovery means to you and how services can help you towards your recovery. If you would like to contribute, please call Simon on 01707 328014.

Changes to Mental Health Act 1983

The Mental Health Act 2007 has amended the Mental Health Act 1983. It introduces some changes to the 1983 Act but leaves most of it unaltered. This means that the 1983 Act is still the piece of legislation which is used to detain people. Most of the changes came into effect on 3rd November 2008. The Code of Practice to the Mental Health Act 1983 gives guidance on how the Act should be applied.

Viewpoint will be producing a separate newsletter about the changes. In the meantime, here is a brief summary:

● Definition of mental disorder

Mental disorder now has one broad definition and means 'any disorder or disability of the mind.' There used to be four categories: mental illness, mental impairment, severe mental impairment and psychopathic disorder.

● Criteria for detention

It is not possible to detain patients unless medical treatment, which is appropriate for their disorder and all their particular circumstances, is available to them. The purpose of the treatment must be to alleviate or prevent a worsening of the disorder, or one or more of its symptoms or manifestations.

● Professional roles

A wider group of professionals, known as Approved Mental Health Professionals and Responsible Clinicians, can take on the functions formerly performed by Approved Social Workers and Responsible Medical Officers.

● Supervised Community Treatment

Some patients who have been detained in hospital will be able to continue their treatment in the community subject to certain conditions. These are designed to ensure that they do not stop the medical treatment they need. If a patient refuses or objects to the treatment, s/he will be recalled to hospital for the treatment to be given. Patients cannot be given it against their will in the community except in very limited circumstances in an emergency.

● Nearest relative

The Nearest Relative has various rights, including the right to be consulted and to object to admission and to discharge. These rights will also apply to Supervised Community Treatment. Nearest Relatives include civil partners. Patients have the right to make an application to displace their Nearest Relative and, where there are reasonable grounds, the County Courts can displace the Nearest Relative as well.

● Mental Health Review Tribunal

Hospital managers are required to refer the patient to the Mental Health Review Tribunal six months from the day on which the patient was first detained. Patients receiving Supervised Community Treatment will have the right to appeal to the Tribunal.

● Independent Mental Health Advocacy Services

From April 2009, there will be independent mental health advocates available to support detained patients.

● Electro convulsive therapy (ECT)

Detained patients, who have the capacity to consent to ECT, can only be given it if they consent to it. If they refuse, they cannot be given it.

Thank you to everyone who completed the survey we sent out in the summer asking about their experiences of being detained under the Mental Health Act 1983. The outcomes are currently being evaluated and will be used to compare how the changes to the Act affect detained patients in the future.

Thank you Mark!



'We were delighted when Mark Lowing came up with the idea of a swimming group for Guideposts,' says Lorna Cunningham, Manager. 'Mark was a life guard when he was younger, so he understands and wants to share the

benefits of swimming as a regular exercise and that it's more fun if you do it with other people. At the beginning of the year, he set up a regular group which meets at the Venue in Borehamwood every week. After this Mark went on to do a sponsored swim and raised the grand total of £438.50 for us! This is going to be used solely for the Guideposts group that Mark attends in Borehamwood. The group decided that they would like to use the money for training that they can all access so that people can have the opportunity to develop new interests and skills.'

'We also hope to buy a camera for the group and to go for a Christmas meal,' added Mark. 'I swam 128 lengths which took one and a half hours and I did it to say thank you for all the help that Guideposts has given me over the years. Thank you also to my partner who helped collect the sponsorship money and to Len Goff for his support.'

Welcome to new Spiritual Care Co-ordinator



Verity Harvey has been appointed by Hertfordshire Partnership Foundation Trust (HPFT) as Spiritual Care Co-ordinator. This is a new, part-time, position which involves finding out what spiritual help is provided by HPFT across the county and fulfilling any unmet need by enlisting volunteers who will be trained and supported by Verity. She will

also train and support staff to offer spiritual care. The aim is to also establish a multi faith chaplaincy.

'This is a unique opportunity to involve the community, service users, carers and service providers to create spiritual pathways to recovery,' says Verity. 'The job is like a star fish with me as a resource at the centre and all the legs as autonomous groups in the community setting the agenda. There are plenty of ideas out there, and commitment, and enthusiasm, so I am very hopeful for the future!'

'I was asked to help on the interview panel for a Spiritual Care Co-ordinator', says Rosie Berry, service user. 'The job description was very detailed but we were well briefed by James Holland, Equalities Manager. I found this challenging and had a due sense of responsibility. Verity stood out as someone who has a passion for people and her work, and I am sure she will tackle this new post with determination and sensitivity.'

A Trainee Psychiatric Nurse with No Real Experience

I have been a trainee psychiatric nurse for two and a half years and I read with interest the article by Em Jones in the Viewpoint News Summer 2008, 'Viewpoint trainees invited to Greece.' She pointed out that Greece is at least 25 years behind us in terms of services which would take our mental health services back to 1983 when the Mental Health Act was implemented allowing patients to appeal against detention. Many other changes have taken place since, notably the Crisis Assessment Treatment Teams and the Early Intervention Teams with more changes to mental health services on the way.

However, as a trainee

psychiatric nurse I do realise that no matter how many essays I write and lectures and work placements I attend, I do not know what it is really like to have a diagnosed mental illness. This is something that I can only learn from things such as Em's article and feedback from service users I have met either in the community or in the mental health units.

Some feedback I get from service users is that a ward environment can be suppressive; depressing; scary; boring; violent; that people in prison have more rights as they are at least allowed out for fresh air; and a bad atmosphere can be created by service users and

staff alike. Feedback like that sounds more like 1983 than 2008.

However, there is lots of good feedback from patients which is reflected in the 'thank you' cards given to staff when service users leave the ward, usually accompanied by a box of chocolates which always goes down well. We also get a lot of thanks from service users during ward rounds. The most positive feedback we get is when people leave the ward well and with ongoing support in the community.

In 2009, I will be a qualified psychiatric nurse working with those experiencing the feedback I listed, and I can listen to them and try and put myself in their position and

read articles in newsletters such as Viewpoint's in order to help establish a positive approach to mental health.



Eddy Selby

Influencing the commissioners



The Joint Commissioning Partnership Board oversees mental health and adult learning disabilities services in Hertfordshire. It meets four times a year and holds briefing sessions a week or so beforehand to give service users the opportunity to meet Board members and ask questions. This is an opportunity to influence the commissioners and to have a say on the issues that affect you.

NEXT MEETING

Thursday 22nd January 2009 (2.00pm – 4.00pm)
Council Chamber, Campus West Arts and Conference Centre, The Campus, Welwyn Garden City, AL8 6BX

WANT TO COME ALONG?

Let the Joint Commissioning Team know: **01438 843232**
Joint.commissioning@hertsc.gov.uk

WANT SUPPORT?

Viewpoint staff are very happy to meet up with anyone who would like some moral support at the meetings. Call us on **01707 328014**

The mental well being of Asian women

The report of a community led research project focussing on the mental well being of Asian women from Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan and Bangladeshi communities in Watford was launched this Spring.

Guideposts Trust and Watford Asian Community Care carried out the project jointly. It was funded by the National Institute for Mental Health in England and supported by the Centre for Ethnicity and Health, University of Central Lancashire (UCLAN). The aim was to investigate the knowledge and understanding about the issues of mental well being amongst women from the targeted communities and to examine their views about the accessibility and appropriateness of local mental health services.

The results showed that there were serious gaps in understanding about mental well being and a lack of knowledge and information about how to access local services. The report highlighted the issues of language and culture which need to be addressed, not only by services but also by the communities themselves. The researchers were of the view that stigma attached to mental health could only be reduced once communities were enabled to discuss mental health openly. The provision of more culturally sensitive services would help to facilitate this.

'This report is a working document which contains a lot of excellent recommendations to improve the mental well being of Asian women,' said Leslie Billy of The Guideposts Trust. Jayant Tanna, the Manager of Watford Asian Community Care, said 'It was a wonderful opportunity to be involved first hand in this research. It has enabled the community to highlight gaps and make very meaningful and appropriate recommendations.'

Congratulations to Watford Asian Community Care, Guideposts Trust and all the researchers who volunteered their time and expertise. Their work is a catalyst for change in Watford!

Copies of the report are available from: Guideposts Trust
 Tel **01923 223554** email lbilly@guidepoststrust.org.uk
 WACC Tel: **01923 229903** or at www.wa-cc.org.uk



Left to right
 Jayant Tanna, WACC
 Leslie Billy, Guideposts
 Bill Macintyre, HPFT
 Minakshi Amin, Guideposts
 Pravina Patel, WACC
 Joanna Hicks, UCLAN

Recovery from Schizophrenia

What it means for me



This article aims to educate its readers about my own personal holistic 'recovery' story, in order to inspire hope and optimism that a 'recovery' may always be possible in schizophrenic individuals. Social inclusion, building healthy (assertive) relationships, creativity and living a healthy lifestyle have all been vehicles for my 'recovery'.

Before I started to recover, I was either bedridden or pacing my flat, no drugs worked, and I had to cope with highly distressing, derogatory voices. My medication caused restlessness and involuntary movements. My concentration was poor and I was isolated in my flat and socially excluded.

In 1999, I experienced my first psychotic attack. I had the irrational belief (delusion) that paedophiles were out to murder me inside my house, and dump my dead body in the forest. So I took to the streets and ran away from everyone in case they were a paedophile. After going missing for four days and nights, the police eventually found me in a red, tatty, abandoned car in Essex at four o'clock in the morning. I was admitted to a secure psychiatric hospital. I was lucky to have been found alive.

Between the years 1999 and 2006, I experienced about three further psychotic attacks. Each psychosis resulted in severe and prolonged post-psychotic depression which made me bedridden for months at a time. Between the years 2005 and 2006, I was given the diagnosis of paranoid schizophrenia.

At Christmas 2006, I was admitted to hospital to have my medication changed to a high dose of Quetiapine (Seroquel). I have been in recovery for about two years this Christmas 2008. My new medication has promoted my recovery.

Making recovery a reality!

Biological	Psychological	Spiritual	Social inclusion
New anti-psychotic medication.	Able to concentrate well.	Making attempts to come to terms with past abuse and to move on to a better future. Learning to forgive those who have abused me.	Beginning to feel socially included by becoming involved in the work of the Centre of Recovery at Hertfordshire University (The Centre) and becoming a Viewpoint member.
Coping better with the stress of social interaction by swimming intensively 3 times a week.	Written several articles eg this Viewpoint article about my <i>Recovery from Schizophrenia</i> .	Setting appropriate boundaries with others.	Building healthy (assertive) relationships with others.
Coping with distressing voices by eating fish and green vegetables every day.		Developing a positive attitude to life. Developing equal relationships with others.	Doing involvement 'work' from Jan 2008 for The Centre.
Drinking lots of water instead of coffee.		Listening to others. Respecting myself. Being in control of my life.	Attended the <i>Identifying Your Skills: Building Your Confidence</i> course March 2008 - April 2008 (8 weeks) run by Viewpoint.

Contribution to society

Today, I am socially included and I have done this in six months from January – July 2008. I delivered a great presentation at The Centre's *Hearing Voices* workshop in May 2008 and then became a service user trainer with Viewpoint.

In my recovery, I am feeling much more positive, content and happy. My work with The Centre and Viewpoint is a valuable contribution to society because I believe it is helping to improve the quality of life of people with schizophrenia.

A big part of my 'recovery' has been learning to accept my negative feelings, such as feeling stressed and tired after giving my presentation for The Centre's *Hearing Voices* workshop. Some people have tried to deny me my distressing feelings. Their negative attitude towards me has frequently left me feeling emotionally violated and abused. However, Viewpoint staff have understood and just accepted my negative emotions as being a normal part of my varying 'energy levels'.

To conclude, I believe with absolute certainty that I will stay recovered. I would also like to thank Sonya Levin, Senior Lecturer, Centre for Mental Health Recovery, who has given me a great deal of support which has enabled me to move on towards a better future and to help other people cope with their schizophrenia by writing articles and delivering presentations on my recovery to mental health workers/professionals. I hope this article gives optimism and hope to schizophrenics and their caregivers that a recovery may always be possible. If you have any questions, please email me on clare980@btinternet.com.

Clare Wood

Celebrating World Mental Health Day

This year the theme was making mental health issues across the world a global priority. A series of very well supported events were held across Hertfordshire promoting mental well being, including a Choral Evensong at St Alban's Cathedral.

Hatfield



Hitchin



Watford



Cheshunt



Spirituality in Self-discovery

Thirty five years ago a sudden psychotic breakdown, accompanying a powerful 'spiritual' experience, shattered my understanding of myself. Through further psychotic episodes, interspersed with deep depression and crippling anxiety, I struggled with my confusion and sought help from both medical professionals and spiritual leaders. Neither I, nor they, could make sense of the co-existence of the 'spiritual', potentially life enhancing, experience with the pathologically damaging psychoses. I was in a wilderness of uncertainty, but fifteen years later stabilised on medication, on commenting to a counsellor that 'I wanted to find out who I am', I was referred to a Jungian therapist.

The therapeutic relationship developed encouragingly as I painted, wrote imaginative stories and explored symbolic themes. After nearly two years I was introduced to an iconic painting of three

stylised figures grouped round a table for a meal, and seemingly offering hospitality, love and acceptance to the viewer. The next morning, still reflecting on the



mystery of what the painting was conveying to me, I arose early and, looking into my garden, saw three chairs I had grouped together previously. In a flash the picture's meaning for me made sense and I was aware of being loved and accepted by something 'beyond and greater than myself'.

This was a turning point in my therapy and over the intervening years I have slowly, not without struggling, come to some understanding of where I fit into the scheme of things and so move towards accepting myself as I am. It's an ongoing healing/recovery process.

I now paint regularly and have depicted the three symbolic figures set in a favourite Lake District scene. The picture includes a fourth figure to symbolise my own involvement with the three caring mystical figures in this process of growth towards self-acceptance.

David Norman

My struggle, my creativity, my life

I never asked to be born with creative talents. In fact, because my self esteem is so low, I always think people are talking about somebody else instead of me. However, I realise that maybe God has given me a snorkel: a way to breathe



The Menorah at Chanukah

through water, the water being life and all its problems. That way is through poetry, writing lyrics and painting.

I do not know if you need to be gifted to paint or paint to be gifted. I am not even sure how I began to paint. My efforts at primary school were noticed and rewarded but the art teacher at grammar school left and was never replaced.

My painting stultified. Like Bob Dylan who believes all artistic talent is transferable, I moved across to poetry and made my tracks there. Slowly, over the last few years I began to paint again,

and it poured out of me.

Art to me is an expression of self. It can lead to tears and joy, a bit like watching your favourite football team. It's something that I can do alone. Unlike some organisations believe, I don't need a social worker beside me in a class.

I held an exhibition at Harpenden and raised money for orphans living with families who have HIV. I sold some paintings and it is strange to know they are being framed. I would like to see grants available so that money is given in the form of vouchers so people can use them at art shops.

Another exhibition I held gave me more problems as my paintings and poems were removed for being too controversial. My exhibition was in honour of my friend Chris who is on Death Row in Alabama, USA.

It is my wish to sell more paintings and make a living out of my work and to have a little studio. I want to raise funds to help an orphanage I visited in Gdansk, Poland that needs money for clothes, toys, bus trips and a hydrotherapy building. If anybody is interested in this work, please contact me care of jacqui@hertsviewpoint.co.uk.

I need to publicly thank a few people for showing me I have talent even if I do not believe in it myself. These people are my



The prophet Paul after he was blinded on the road to Damascus

friends Lucy Johnston and Ania and Eva Tejs in Poland, Bill Macintyre, Chief Executive of Hertfordshire Partnership Foundation Trust, and Frank and Andrew, staff from the day centre at St Peters Street. Most important of all, I wish to thank the tramp who brought me back to life one day in Whitechapel when I was 16. He turned my life around from drugs and alcohol and no job. I also want to thank my PE teacher, Mr Lines, who dived into a pool and saved my life. Without these people my work would never be known.

Andrew Strowman

Working Towards Recovery

A new Recovery Booklet, 'Working Towards Recovery' has been produced by Hertfordshire Partnership Foundation Trust and The Centre for Mental Health Recovery at the University of Hertfordshire about people's experiences through mental ill health and into employment, occupation or other personally meaningful activities. For a free copy contact Lara Harwood on 01727 897217 Lara.Harwood@hertspartsft.nhs.uk.

Extract from *Breaking Free: my story*



'I have no life left. Today I must make the decision whether to live or die, once and for all.' An excerpt from my diary April 2006. I lay on my bed gazing up at the ceiling. My flat lay in chaos around me. My debts were piling up. I had tried so many times to take my life over the past 8 years of my illness. I had been labelled with severe borderline personality disorder: a label which was as harmful as the illness itself.

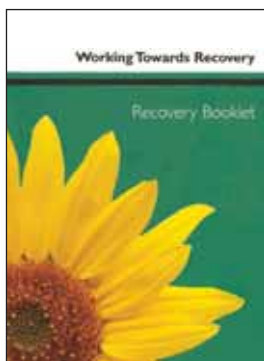
I could no longer get help from the hospital, A & E, and the psychiatrists and doctors now just dismissed my cries for help. I had to make that decision as to whether to lie on the tracks of the railway line or to get up, 'dust myself down and start all over again'. I had been fine and well in the past. I told myself I could do it again. I had worked as a successful medical secretary within hospitals in Hertfordshire. I had been devoted and dedicated to my job, until that day I became ill.

On looking back, I should never have left my employment through sickness. It was the worst thing I could have done. I rapidly became isolated and had nothing 'solid' left to steer my thoughts and energies to.

I was determined to get back on track. I began to lose weight. I began to become more confident and even managed to start to travel on public transport again.

I found the Crossroad's Women's Centre, Kentish Town, London, and began volunteering there later that year in September 2006. I told the women at the centre openly of my history of problems. I will never forget to the end of my days that they welcomed me with open arms. They encouraged me to follow a healthy diet and try homeopathy, which all helped greatly towards my recovery.

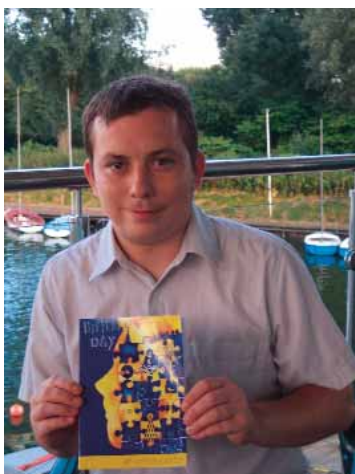
The work carried out at the Women's Centre is incredible, working against injustices. Volunteering three times or so a week put positive use to my energies and amongst many other skills, my communication skills slowly returned. The companionship and support I received from the centre was the key to getting me back to where I am now. I have since gone on to get involved with Viewpoint and am currently learning to train custody sergeants and police recruits to help bridge that vital void between the police force and mental health. In addition, I am thrilled that I contributed to the successful bid by Viewpoint to conduct research on recovery outcomes and am a member of the research team.



Angela Louise Johnson

Different Day

This is Steven Cowley's second book which deals with his issues of homelessness, substance misuse and mental health which also offers hope and strength to show that it is possible to survive distress and become successful. It was launched this summer at the Young Mariners Base in Cheshunt. Copies cost £5.50 and can be purchased via his email address stevencowley1980@yahoo.co.uk.



Extract from *Different Day*
Young people do care

When I was homeless and went to Edinburgh, where I was sleeping rough, I personally thought the group of people I would get the most hassle from and who would be a fret would be the teenagers. In the news we hear of all these stories about anti social behaviour and thug culture. In Edinburgh there is a big gang culture and often there are fights between different teams

of gangs. In fact, out of all the age groups the young teams of teenagers ended up being the most understanding and compassionate of people. Although there were kind and compassionate people in all age groups but, being English begging in Scotland, I was wary of what might happen to me.

The teenagers were fantastic, talking to me about my situation. As a beggar you don't beg OAPs, mothers with kids or young people, which I didn't. But these young people would still come to me and all chip in between themselves to give me a few pounds or give me a bit of their alcohol, sometimes a bit of hash. Since then my opinion and perception of teenagers has changed. Young people do care about what's going on around them. Often we don't listen to teenagers due to the typical stereotype of someone with a baseball cap or hooded top. We need to reach out to young people in the community with projects aimed at young people. Let's build an inclusive society and not start labelling youth as bad people. They are the future of this country.

Steven Cowley

New survey

Viewpoint has teamed up with Carers in Herts, Herts Mind Network and Guideposts Trust to devise two questionnaires, one for carers and one for service users to review the mental health treatment and care of adults of working age in Hertfordshire. The results will be analysed by a qualified researcher and the findings will be used to inform those who provide and commission mental health services about their strength and weaknesses. The survey has been distributed widely through our networks and Hertfordshire Partnership Foundation Trust has also sent out copies to a random selection of clients.

If you have not received a questionnaire and would like one, please call the Viewpoint office on 01707 328014.

Care Services Improvement Partnership **CSIP**

REAL PEOPLE REAL POWER

CONFERENCE

Led By Regional Experts by Experience Group Of
Mental Health Service users and Carers

Free to Delegates

Target audience Service Users, Carers
and a limited number of Practitioners

Thursday 19 March 2009
9.30am-4.00pm
Fielder Centre
Hatfield
Hertfordshire


Various interactive workshops/presentations on
many current topics

Lunch and refreshments provided.

Closing date for application: 16 February 2009

For further information , please contact
Peter Millist, CSIP Eastern Development Centre
654 The Crescent, Colchester Business Park
Colchester
Essex CO4 9YQ

Phone: 01206 287587
Fax: 01206 287597
E-mail: peter.millist@csip.org.uk

We help to improve services and achieve better outcomes for children and families, adults and older people including those with mental health problems, physical or learning disabilities or people in the criminal justice system. We work with and are funded by  Department of Health

Hertfordshire Partnership **NHS**
NHS Foundation Trust

**DVD Resource for Minority
Ethnic Communities in
Hertfordshire**



Hertfordshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust are currently looking for Service Users, Carers and community members from all minority ethnic backgrounds to take part in a new DVD promoting emotional health and wellbeing within Hertfordshire for these communities.

We are looking for people who would like to share their experiences, appear on film, speak on the DVD, or talk about relatives or friends that have an interesting story to tell about their recovery.

We are looking for people from across all services.

The DVD will be launched early 2009 and distributed all throughout Hertfordshire in an effort to improve access to local mental health services for minority ethnic communities in the county.

If you are interested in getting involved, please contact James Holland for more information at:
james.holland@hertspartsft.nhs.uk or 01727 897206

Wanted! Expert by Experience for Hertfordshire

The Experts by Experience Group (EbE Group) is a service user and carer reference group which works to ensure that service users and carers are involved in all aspects of the work of the Care Services Improvement Partnership (CSIP). The group is made up of service users/survivors and carers from each mental health authority in the Eastern Region comprising Norfolk, Suffolk, Peterborough & Cambridge, Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire, North Essex and South Essex.

The EbE Group meets six times a year, with sub groups undertaking specific tasks. Payment and travel expenses are paid.

The Eastern Region EbE Group is very keen to recruit a representative on mental health issues for Hertfordshire. This is an opportunity for you to have your views heard and to influence regional developments.

To find out more, contact
Ian.Griggs@csip.org.uk or Peter Millist, Programme Administrator on 01206 287587.

Out of Sight Out of Mind?

This project will explore stories and accounts of life at the former Hill End Hospital and other hospitals in the area, with a view to creating a performance at Trestle Arts Base, the converted chapel of the Hill End and Cell Barnes hospitals, and an archive of the material gathered.

If you have any stories or pictures of your experiences at the hospitals, please do get in contact with Trestle Theatre: **01727 850950**
takingpart@trestle.org.uk
www.trestle.org.uk

Would you like to improve mental health services in Hertfordshire?

Viewpoint's purpose is to use the views and expertise of people who use or have used mental health services in Hertfordshire to bring about change for the better. We help interested groups and individuals to get involved in the development, provision and monitoring of mental health services. If you want to influence the future of services, we can support you to make a difference!

Viewpoint offers training and travel expenses for people who want to get involved and works with a group of trainers who give presentations about their road to recovery from mental ill health. We welcome contributions to this newsletter on a positive theme.

To find out more and receive the newsletter, please fill out the slip on the back page and return to us.

Viewpoint is a registered charity: number 1105423

MEMORY

There is a garden in my heart
Blue and purple flowers softly blend
With white and deep, deep green
I tread unseen.

There is a garden in my heart
Bees gather on the lavender
And scent intoxicates the air
I am there.

There is a garden in my heart
Where water splashes from a fountain
And goldfish slip idly by
As I.

The garden in my heart
Will always be
A place of precious memory.

Virginia Coan



Artwork and calligraphy by Virginia Coan

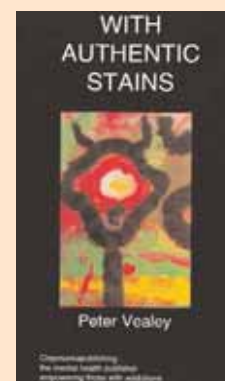


Photo taken by Alan H.

The new religion

I've acquired a black tie now.
A tie for every occasion.
One to be hapless extrovert.
One to let my hair down.
Another to be sombre and cool.
Nothing can catch me out.
No one can get to me.
My new religion is in place.
Flirted with meditation,
Lost heart in sex.
Too many lonely nights
At singles clubs.
Oh but I can sleep
At nights now.
Still weep for the absence of
What is right.
Everything will be fine.
This new religion is kind
And pray it will be forever mine.

Peter Vealey



Congratulations to Peter who has had his first book of poems, 'With Authentic Stains', published by Chipmunk Publishing. Copies can be bought via the website chipmunkpublishing.com. The artwork was designed by fellow Viewpoint member, Andrew H Smith, and reproduced with his consent.

'Dealing with mental illness' VIEWPOINT DVD!

Viewpoint has produced a DVD as a training tool for staff who want to gain an insight into mental illness from the perspective of those who use adult mental health services. It plays for 24 minutes and looks at:

- How it feels to experience mental illness
- What helps in the process of developing good mental health
- The way forward to improve mental health services

See the whole person and not just the diagnosis is the message.

If you would like more information about obtaining copies of the DVD, please contact Jacqui Deakin at Viewpoint on 01707 328014 or email jacqui@hertsviewpoint.co.uk



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If you would like more information about Viewpoint and to receive our newsletter, contact us on 01707 328014, or complete the reply slip below and send in an envelope with no need of stamps to Viewpoint, FREEPOST NAT8850, Welwyn Garden City, Herts, AL7 1BR.

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